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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: MONUC DIVISIONAL COMMANDER COMMENTS ON NORTH KIVU OPERATION

REF: KIN 1814

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROGER MEECE. REASON 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Ambassador hosted for lunch on Saturday, November 5 MONUC's eastern division commander, MG Patrick Cammaert. The Ambassador asked for Cammaert's observations regarding the recently-launched FARDC/MONUC operation in North Kivu province targeting FDLR and Mai Mai elements in the Virunga area.

12. (C) Cammaert reaffirmed that the operation represented a new element in the area. The ostensible lead role of FARDC troops, the use of an integrated FARDC brigade, and a coordinated operation in North Kivu are all new and welcome developments in the Kivu provinces. Responding to questions, Cammaert also affirmed that the operation has the support of North Kivu Governor Serufuli and FARDC 8th Military District Commander Amisi, also both important elements. (Comment: Amisi and Serufuli in essence represent rival centers of power in the province, with Serufuli in particular seeking to establish himself as the primary authority for the province. End comment). Cammaert noted that the MONUC Indian brigade commander in North Kivu had played a key role to obtain a FARDC decision to move out of the operational area "unhelpful" non-integrated FARDC units that had been stationed there, including units associated with Serufuli, a former "self-defense" force who presumably still feel a primary loyalty to Serufuli rather than the FARDC chain of command. Cammaert noted, however, that these units might return to the area as follow-on operations continue over a longer period of time, or expand their geographic scope. The Ambassador asked if all the elements of the 5th Brigade, including ex-MLC, so-called ex-Government, and ex-RCD troops, were all fully participating and working reasonably well together. Cammaert affirmed that to be the case.

13. (C) While encouraged by the development, Cammaert also expressed caution. He underscored that the FARDC brigade, having received additional training from MONUC in addition to that offered during the integration process, is a step above most FARDC units, but it still has severe limitations. MONUC is obliged to lead much of the operational planning. FARDC logistical support is all but non-existent, and as elsewhere MONUC is obliged to provide food, water, and other supplies to the FARDC troops, a function for which MONUC is not budgeted. MONUC is also providing medevac and other services, all of which are frequently over the reserves or opposition of MONUC and DPKO administrators. MONUC is also providing all air support and much if not all of the ground transportation being utilized for the troops. Cammaert reported that the 5th Integrated Brigade seemed to be better equipped than the 3rd Integrated Brigade now being deployed to South Kivu, but basic equipment remains a problem. (Note: Belgium is in the process of transferring large quantities of material to the DRC to equip the 3rd Integrated Brigade. End note). Salary payments to the FARDC troops involved in this operation, as elsewhere, is another major problem.

14. (C) Contrary to initial information, Cammaert also confirmed that some FDLR combatants had been killed by FARDC troops in early action in Virunga Park. He did not have a figure, but believed the FDLR casualties to be relatively small. The FDLR combatants killed were in addition to the Mai Mai killed in nearby operations to free Election Commission personnel that were being held. The Ambassador noted that FDLR troops in South Kivu to-date had avoided open confrontation with FARDC/MONUC forces operating in combination. Cammaert speculated that the FDLR in question had been caught by surprise and therefore chose to resist, acknowledging that the FDLR normally chooses to retreat.

15. (C) Cammaert also highlighted a problem with FDLR prisoners. A group of FDLR prisoners captured the previous week in South Kivu had refused repatriation to Rwanda, and UN DDDR personnel had therefore returned the prisoners to the FARDC. FDLR prisoners caught in the North Kivu operation were being similarly transferred to DDDR authorities, but if they too refused repatriation, they also presumably would be given back to the FARDC. It is not clear what will happen over the long-term to these FDLR prisoners who refuse repatriation.

16. (C) In northeastern DRC, Cammaert confirmed that MONUC companies and helicopter refueling facilities were being

established at a working base in Abo to deal with any Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) troops returning to the area. Cammaert said that he would welcome any information available, particularly if actionable, regarding potential LRA presence or operations in the DRC.

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